



State Capitol | Lansing, Michigan 48913

PH (517) 373.2420 | FAX (517) 373.2764

www.senate.michigan.gov/gop/senator/garcia/

For Immediate Release
February 25, 2004

Contact: Karen Szczepanski
517-373-2420

Senate to examine delayed unemployment benefits

Lansing – Members of the Michigan Senate want to know why Michigan workers are still facing a backlog in unemployment benefits. Several Senate offices have been inundated with calls from citizens begging for help.

The Department of Labor and Economic Growth promised to correct customer service problems in January 2003, but serious problems have persisted with regards to the processing of unemployment claims.

“We want to know why so many unemployed workers are still waiting for their cases to be resolved so they can receive their benefit payments, and why it still takes so long to get through the system,” said Sen. Valde Garcia, R-Howell. “Somewhere along the line, the system isn’t working, and we owe it to Michigan families to do what we can to correct that.”

Garcia, chair of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Government Operations, plans to hold hearings to explore the issue and will ask the state Auditor General to conduct a performance audit on the department.

More than a year ago, the Department of Labor and Economic Growth outlined the steps it was taking to correct customer service problems that were hindering Michigan’s unemployment system. They expected to have the issues resolved last fall, but late benefit payments continue to plague Michigan workers.

“While a good number of improvements have been made, a year later is not what I would call a ‘timely correction,’” Garcia said. “We need to get to the root of this problem. Michigan’s unemployed workers cannot afford to wait any longer for their benefits. Department employees are working hard to help people, but now they need help. Perhaps the only way for us to get the governor to take action immediately is for unemployed workers to call the governor directly and let her know the pain they are feeling. We need the governor to take action now to make sure that workers guaranteed unemployment checks get them in a timely manner, not in 24 weeks like we have heard from our constituents.”

(More)

In 2000, the Legislature passed SB 1164, now PA 186 of 2000, which sped up the processing time for unemployment claims. Last year, HB 4945, legislation to leverage additional funds for unemployment benefits, was passed and became PA 174 of 2003.

###